

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Loneliness and Its Impact on the Psychological Well-Being of Indonesian Students Abroad: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

The increase in the number of international students from Indonesia continues. Cultural and environmental differences between home countries and study destinations present significant challenges, one of which is loneliness, which is a common problem among students. Studies show that loneliness affects the mental and academic health of international students, including those from Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of loneliness on psychological well-being and its six dimensions in Indonesian students studying abroad. This study used a quantitative correlational approach, with the research instruments being the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Psychological Wellbeing Scale. A total of 214 participants were selected through purposive sampling and analysed using multiple linear regression analysis techniques. The results showed that the majority of participants had low levels of loneliness (79.4%) and high psychological well-being (69.2%). Furthermore, loneliness had a negative role on each dimension of psychological well-being and overall psychological well-being with a range of 0.232-0.518. Thus, it can be concluded that the lower the loneliness of university students, the higher their psychological well-being and conversely. The findings imply the need to increase students' awareness of psychological health and the active role of student organisations in facilitating self-adjustment and strengthening social relationships to maintain the psychological well-being of Indonesian students abroad.

Keywords: Abroad; Adaptation; Indonesian students; Loneliness; Psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Today, globalization is a gateway that makes it easy for individuals in various places to connect with each other, and education is no exception. Globalization makes it easier for each individual, especially the younger generation, to access information related to education outside their region and provide many choices for quality education. This is also felt by the young generation of Indonesia, where globalization makes it easy for them to get information related to universities outside Indonesia and the various scholarships offered to study at these universities. This is evident from UNESCO data in 2022 which recorded 62,828 students from Indonesia continuing their higher education in various countries around the world. This figure has increased by 3,171 students from the previous year and shows an increase in the interest of Indonesia's young generation to get an education abroad. Studying abroad provides students with wider opportunities to develop their potential, broaden their horizons, and increase global competitiveness (Andrian et

al., 2020).

Even so, there are still negative impacts felt by students when studying abroad. Based on research by Wijaya and Rossalia (2024), it is known that there are several things that hinder Indonesian students in the Netherlands, ranging from language differences and ways of communicating that make students hampered in socializing, difficulty in organizing and completing their work, and academic performance that is not as expected. In another study conducted by Rahmatullah et al. (2022) in Turkey, it was found that students had difficulty adapting to climate differences, especially the extreme winter in the country which resulted in the inhibition of students to do activities during the winter. In addition, based on research Govinda and Hanami (2023), Indonesian students in Japan experience obstacles in language, socialization with the local community, community character, feelings of loneliness, food, and a different climate than in Indonesia and difficulties in adapting to the campus environment. These various demands and obstacles create pressure and stress that prevent students from obtaining a maximum college experience and disrupt students' psychology, which can result in a decrease in psychological well-being.

This is in line with the findings of Rahmatullah et al. (2022) and Susanti & Supradaniati (2018) found that students from Indonesia in the UK and Turkey have low psychological well-being, especially in the aspects of environmental mastery and self-acceptance, as well as positive relationships with others. In another study by

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Wijaya and Rossalia (2024) 2 out of 3 Indonesian students in the Netherlands also had suboptimal psychological well-being, especially in the aspects of environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, and life goals, this was influenced by the challenges and obstacles faced while studying abroad.

According to Ryff (1989) psychological well-being is a condition in which a person can fully accept himself, master his environment well, have positive relationships with others, and can have feelings of happiness and satisfaction with his life. Optimal psychological well-being is the result of the potential that individuals have both in terms of physical, mental, and social (Ryff & Singer, 1996). In addition, according to Halim and Dariyo (2016) psychological well-being is a form of positive and balanced life that can be achieved by individuals if they fulfill all aspects positively. According to Ryff and Singer (1996) psychological well-being consists of six aspects, namely self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose of life, and personal growth.

Self-acceptance is self-acceptance of various aspects of the self, starting from past experiences and the good and bad qualities of the self (Ryff & Singer, 1996). The failure of students to fulfill this aspect makes students unable to accept their condition with the challenges faced often makes them feel ashamed, inappropriate, or incompetent to receive education in that place. The next aspect, namely positive relationships with others, is an individual's ability to build deep relationships with others that involve empathy and compassion (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Students' failure to fulfill this aspect due to language and cultural barriers makes them difficult to establish social relationships and lack of quality relationships with others. The autonomy aspect is the ability of individuals to live independently and can make their own decisions without depending on others (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Failure in this aspect makes it difficult for students to do self-evaluation and face social pressure and other obstacles while studying abroad because they are too dependent on others.

Environmental mastery is related to an individual's ability to manage their activities and make good use of opportunities to develop their potential (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Students' failure in this aspect makes them overwhelmed in managing their tasks and activities, which makes it difficult for students to focus on their academic development. The purpose of life aspect discusses the ability to determine the purpose and direction of life (Ryff & Singer, 1996). The obstacles and demands faced often prevent students from achieving their goals to the fullest. The last aspect, namely personal growth, is the ability of individuals to develop their potential and be open to new experiences (Ryff & Singer, 1996). A decrease in this aspect in students can occur due to language and cultural barriers that often cause difficulties in mingling and often cause fear to try to interact further, causing a feeling of being down with these conditions.

Increases and decreases in individual psychological well-being can generally be caused by several factors including age, education, and culture (Ryff & Singer, 1996), gender and meaning of life (Ryff, 1989), socioeconomic status (Ryan & Deci, 2001), and feelings of loneliness (Halim & Dariyo, 2016). Among these various factors, loneliness is one of the most vulnerable problems felt by international students and can have an impact on their psychological well-being.

Loneliness is generally defined by Russell (1982) as a negative feeling due to a mismatch between expected social relationships and those that individuals have. Based

on an international survey, 3 out of 4 international students in the UK experience loneliness (Wawera & McCamley, 2020). In addition, based on research in Germany, it is known that Chinese international students experience higher levels of loneliness when compared to local students (Bilecen et al., 2024). In Indonesia itself, Hayundaka and Yuniardi (2023) noted that 68.9% of overseas students were at a moderate level of loneliness and 17.2% at a high level.

Feelings of loneliness are particularly vulnerable in adolescents and early adults, especially undergraduate students. This is supported by an *Office for National Statistics* (ONS) survey in the UK which found that 16-24 year olds felt more lonely than any other age group. This vulnerability is caused by various crucial social transitions experienced by students, such as changes in the education system and new environments, as well as demands to live independently (Kristlyna & Sudagijono, 2020; Taylor et al., 2006). If these transitions are not successfully navigated, feelings of loneliness can arise and persist.

This feeling of loneliness if allowed to persist can lead to feelings of depression, disinterest in building social relationships to social isolation (Girmay & Singh, 2019). Furthermore, this lonely condition can affect mental well-being and academic performance, resulting in a decrease in the psychological well-being of the students themselves (Bek, 2014). This is in line with several previous studies by Halim and Dariyo (2016), Hayundaka and Yuniardi (2023), Nuraini and Laksmiwati (2024), Nurdianto et al. (2023) showing that feelings of loneliness affect the decline in psychological well-being of students. Where, the higher the level of loneliness felt, the lower the level of individual psychological well-being.

Theoretically, loneliness can inhibit Ryff (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being in international students. Where, feelings of loneliness make them not interested in building social relationships and prefer to isolate themselves from the social environment (Girmay & Singh, 2019). This condition directly inhibits the dimension of positive relations with others. From this condition, it can also make individuals feel worthless which has an impact on their self-acceptance dimension. Furthermore, this protracted feeling of loneliness makes students lazy and does not develop in their academic environment (Bek, 2014), which can have a direct impact on the dimensions of personal growth and environmental mastery of the individual himself. In the end, the failure of students to interact and develop due to feelings of loneliness causes individuals to lose their direction and purpose in life, which affects the dimensions of purpose of life and autonomy. Thus, it can be concluded that loneliness is not just a feeling of sadness due to a lack of social relationships, but a condition that structurally reduces the psychological well-being of students.

However, based on a review of the literature, it is known that the relationship between loneliness and psychological well-being is not always singular and is often moderated or mediated by other factors that can strengthen or weaken the impact that loneliness has on individual well-being. Based on research by Mishra et al. (2023), it is known that the effect of loneliness and social isolation on psychological well-being is partially mediated by individual marital status. Where marital status as a form of social support in a marriage relationship indirectly reduces the negative impact of loneliness and social isolation on married seniors. In the context of international students, psychological distress emerged as a significant mediating variable. Where loneliness and social isolation can trigger psychological distress, which in turn can

worsen overall mental and emotional well-being (Girmay & Singh, 2019). This is also in line with the findings of Hayundaka and Yuniardi (2023) which show that loneliness mediates the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. In other words, high self-esteem can reduce loneliness, which then contributes to improving students' psychological well-being.

Research related to psychological well-being in the population of Indonesian students abroad has been conducted previously such as research conducted by (Rahmatullah et al. (2022), Selian et al. (2020) and Wijaya & Rossalia (2024). In addition, research related to the role of loneliness on psychological well-being has also been conducted by Hayundaka and Yuniardi (2023) where loneliness here is a mediating variable between the variables of self-esteem and psychological well-being with the subject of Indonesian students abroad at all levels of education, in research by Nuraini and Laksmiwati (2024) examining the role of loneliness on psychological well-being in undergraduate student subjects at Surabaya State University, and finally research by Nurdianto et al. (2023) loneliness is a moderator variable between psychological distress and psychological well-being with a group of Indonesian student subjects during the covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, research on loneliness and psychological well-being that specifically highlights the role of loneliness on psychological well-being as the main focus on Indonesian students abroad, especially for undergraduate levels who live alone during their studies, is still rare. Thus, it can be concluded that problems related to the psychological well-being conditions of students studying abroad influenced by loneliness, especially at the undergraduate level, are a topic of concern that needs to be studied further. Therefore, on this occasion the researcher aims to examine the negative role of loneliness on psychological well-being in Indonesian undergraduate students studying abroad.

This study will focus on examining the impact that loneliness has on the psychological well-being of Indonesian students studying abroad. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the development of further research related to psychological well-being in Indonesian students abroad, as well as provide knowledge to the community, especially Indonesian students abroad and prospective students who are interested in continuing their education abroad.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study uses correlational quantitative research methods. This research aims to measure and analyse the relationship of the independent variable to the dependent variable using statistical techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Where this study aims to analyse the relationship between feelings of loneliness and the psychological well-being conditions of Indonesian students studying abroad.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of demographic questions, a loneliness scale, and a psychological well-being scale. The demographic statements contained basic questions about the research participants such as age, gender, country of study, duration of stay, and type of study programme undertaken. The loneliness scale measures the feeling of being alone or

isolated felt by students studying abroad due to the lack of social relationships they have. Meanwhile, the psychological well-being scale aims to measure how happy and satisfied participants are with the life they have while studying abroad.

The loneliness scale used in this study is the UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3) developed by Russell (1996). This scale has been modified by researchers from the Indonesian version of the scale adaptation of Hudiyan et al. (2022). The UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3) is a unidimensional scale that measures global aspects of loneliness. Furthermore, psychological well-being in this study was measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale developed by Ryff and Singer (2006). This scale has been modified by researchers from the Indonesian version of the scale adapted by Eva et al. (2020). This scale measures 6 dimensions in psychological well-being, namely self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life goals, and personal growth.

Both scales, loneliness and psychological well-being, were modified from the Indonesian version to adjust the context of students studying abroad on each item. The process of modifying these two scales began with an analysis of the context and the need for modification, where it was found that the items on the scale were still general and needed to be narrowed down to the context of students studying abroad. Furthermore, item modification was carried out, where the item questions from both scales were revised by adding phrases such as "during your study abroad".

After the revision process, expert judgement was conducted by 4 experts consisting of 1 psychologist and 3 psychology lecturers to assess the content validity of the modified scale and provide suggestions for further improvement. From the results of this expert test, it was found that the Aiken's V value of 20 Loneliness scale items was in the range of 0.625-0.9375 ($V > 0.6$) and the Aiken's V value of 42 Psychological Wellbeing scale items was in the range of 0.75 - 0.9375 ($V > 0.6$). This indicates that all items in both scales fulfil content validity. Furthermore, a readability test was conducted by 20 representative respondents to ensure readability and understanding of the items.

Before the modified scale was ready to be used in the main sample, pilot testing was conducted on a small sample (50 respondents). From this trial, it was found that the discriminant power (>0.3) of the loneliness scale ranged from 0.441-0.772 and the Cronbach Alpha reliability value was 0.922. The loneliness scale which initially consisted of 20 items, at the trial stage 1 item did not meet the requirements and left 19 items used in this study. Meanwhile, the psychological well-being scale which initially consisted of 42 items, after the trial 24 items were eligible with discriminant power ranging from 0.379 - 0.733 and Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.921. The remaining 18 items were eliminated.

In the main sample, the loneliness scale (19 items, four response options) showed discriminant power of 0.284-0.629 and Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.898. The psychological well-being measure (24 items, four response options) had item discriminant power ranging from 0.241-0.621 and Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.880.

Research Respondents

Determination of the sample in this study using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique used on subjects whose criteria are

determined and known in advance based on the characteristics and attributes of the research population (Winarsunu, 2017).

To ensure the focus and accuracy of the findings, this study set strict inclusion criteria in the selection of respondents. Respondents who met the criteria were active undergraduate students from Indonesia, either studying full-time or participating in a student exchange programme abroad, and in the age range of 18-24 years old. The justification for choosing these criteria was to focus the research on individuals who are in the same transition period, both in terms of educational level and psychosocial development. In addition, respondents were limited to students who lived alone (not with family members) while studying abroad. This restriction aimed to ensure that respondents had relevant experiences of feelings of loneliness resulting from a lack of social relationships in a new environment, thereby increasing the validity of their responses.

Conversely, exclusion criteria were applied to respondents who did not fulfil the inclusion criteria or provided inaccurate/incomplete responses. The purpose of this elimination was to maintain the consistency of the study which focused on Indonesian students studying abroad and in transition. Cleansing the data from inappropriate or incomplete responses was done to maintain the quality and integrity of the data, and avoid potential bias in the analysis.

Based on the calculation of the minimum sample using the G-Power programme with the provisions of the significance criterion α 0.05, statistical power β 80% and Slope H1 of 0.2, the minimum number of samples required is 150 respondents.

Research Procedures

To conduct this research, there are several things that are done starting from preparing the instruments used to distributing research questionnaires to research respondents. Instrument preparation by starting with the modification of measuring instruments, which includes the preparation of items, expert judgment to ensure content validity, readability tests, and pilot testing to see the discriminant power and reliability of research instruments.

After the instrument was ready for use, the questionnaire was prepared in the form of a Google Form. This form consists of demographic questions, data confidentiality statements, statements of willingness to participate, and main measuring instruments. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire was 20-25 minutes. To ensure accessibility and ease of participation, the questionnaire was designed to be responsive and easily accessible through various devices.

Given that data collection was conducted online, several proactive measures were taken to maintain the

authenticity and quality of respondents' data. These measures included limiting double-completion (based on email address), providing clear instructions at the beginning of the survey to encourage respondents to complete the questionnaire honestly and thoroughly, and including attention-checking questions to identify respondents who completed the questionnaire inattentively.

Before starting the questionnaire, ethical procedures were carefully applied. Participants were first briefed on the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, and their right to privacy. They were assured that their identity and responses would be kept confidential. In addition, participants were required to give explicit and transparent consent before they could proceed to the questionnaire questions. They were also informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Finally, the questionnaire was distributed online to respondents. The dissemination process was conducted through social media, 98 WhatsApp groups of PPI (Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia) communities in various countries, and IISMA awardee communities. This distribution strategy aimed to maximise the coverage and participation of respondents who fit the research criteria.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study used multiple linear regression data analysis technique as the main analysis technique. This analysis aims to measure the role of loneliness on each dimension of psychological well-being, and also on overall psychological well-being. Prior to this analysis, it is necessary to conduct assumption tests and descriptive analyses. Assumption tests consisting of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity tests are needed to ensure that the existing research data have met the assumptions for conducting multiple linear regression analysis. Meanwhile, descriptive analysis aims to provide a clear picture of the demographics and distribution of respondents' scores. The entire data analysis process in this study was carried out using the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The assumption test in the data analysis of this study according to Azwar (2018) consists of 4 assumption tests that must be carried out before multiple regression analysis, namely normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The following are the results of the assumption tests that have been carried out (see Table 1).

Table 1. Assumption Test Results

Assumption Test	Test Method	Test Statistics	Criteria	Description
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed): 0,2	$p > 0,05$	Data is normally distributed
Linearity	Deviation from linearity	sig.: 0,075	$p > 0,05$	There is a significant linear relationship
Multicollinearity	Tolerance dan VIF	Tolerance: 1 VIF: 1	Tolerance > 0.10 VIF < 10.00	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	scatterplot	Data points spread randomly and do not form a pattern	Does not form a specific pattern	There is no heteroscedasticity problem

From the four assumption tests described in Table 1, it can be concluded that this research data has fulfilled all the prerequisite tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, and supports the validity of the assumptions for further analysis.

Demographic analysis of the 214 participants revealed a range of relevant characteristics. As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents were female (64.0%), 21 years old (30.8%), duration of stay was less than 6 months (54.2%), indicating that many respondents were in their early phase of living and studying abroad. In addition, in terms of the type of study programme, the respondents were predominantly exchange students (52.8%). Furthermore, the results of descriptive statistical analysis for the 214 respondents' scores on the loneliness and psychological well-being scales are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Demographics of Respondents

Respondent Demographic Data	N=214	%
Gender		
Male	77	36
Female	137	64
Age		
18	10	4,7
19	15	7
20	61	28,5
21	66	30,8
22	27	12,6
23	24	11,2
24	11	5,1
Duration		
< 6 months	116	54,2
6 months - 11 months	18	8,4
1 - 2 Years	18	8,4
2 - 3 years	29	13,6
3 - 4 years	24	11,2
> 4 years	9	4,2
Programme Type		
Exchange Program	113	52,8
Full-Time study	101	47,2

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis Results

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Loneliness	214	19	68	31,81	8,56
Psychological Well-Being	214	45	96	76,74	10,188

On the loneliness variable, respondents' scores ranged from 19 to 68, with an average (mean) of 31.81 and a standard deviation (SD) of 8.56. Meanwhile, on the psychological well-being variable, respondents' scores ranged from 45 to 96, with an average (mean) of 76.74 and a standard deviation (SD) of 10.188 (see Table 3).

To provide a more detailed picture of the distribution of loneliness levels and psychological well-being, categorisation was carried out based on a hypothetical approach. This categorisation divides the score range into three categories (low, medium, high) using the mean $\pm$ one standard deviation (SD) formula (Azwar, 2012). The results of the categorisation, as shown in Table 4, indicate that 79.4% of respondents had low levels of loneliness. This contrasts with the level of psychological well-being, which was dominated by the high category (69.2%).

Table 4. Categorisation Results Based on Hypothetical Statistics

Variabel	Category			Total	
	Low	Medium	High		
Loneliness	79,4%	19,6%	0,9%	214	100%
PWB	0,9%	29,9%	69,2%	214	100%

The results of multiple linear regression analysis on the role of loneliness on the psychological well-being of Indonesian students studying abroad are presented in Table 5. The results of the analysis show that the R Square value of each regression model varies. Where the loneliness variable is able to explain the variance in total psychological well-being by 51.8% (Model 7). Meanwhile, the role of loneliness on the 6 dimensions of psychological well-being ranged from 23.2% (Life Purpose) to 50.9% (Self-Acceptance).

In addition, based on the R Square value and Beta (Standardised) coefficient, it can be observed that the Self-Acceptance dimension (Model 1) is the dimension of psychological well-being that is most strongly negatively affected by the loneliness variable. This indicates that approximately 50.9% of the variance in the Self-Acceptance dimension can be explained by the level of loneliness. In contrast, the Life Purpose dimension (Model 5) shows the weakest negative influence among the other dimensions, although it remains statistically significant.

Furthermore, the results of the F test in Table 5 show that the significance value in each model is less than 0.05 (Sig.<0.05) and the calculated F value is greater than the F table ($F_{\text{count}} > F_{\text{table}}$). So it can be concluded that the loneliness variable simultaneously influences the psychological well-being variable as a whole and its six dimensions.

Furthermore, the regression coefficient (B) and t value (see Table 5) show that all models have a significance value smaller than the probability of 0.05 (Sig.<0.05). This indicates that loneliness has a significant role on psychological well-being and each of its dimensions. In addition, based on the calculated t values in Table 5, it is known that all models have negative calculated t values. So it can be interpreted that there is a negative role of loneliness on psychological well-being and each dimension of psychological well-being. In other words, the lower the level of loneliness, the higher the level of psychological well-being including its six dimensions in students studying abroad.

Additional analysis using moderator regression analysis is presented in Table 6. Where demographic data (age, gender, duration of stay and programme type) were used as moderator variables. It was found that age ($p=0.593$), gender ($p=0.543$), and programme type ($p=0.329$) did not significantly moderate the relationship between loneliness and psychological well-being. In other words, the role or impact that the loneliness variable had on students' psychological well-being did not differ significantly across groups of the three moderator variables.

In contrast, the results of the analysis with the duration of stay variable showed significant results. Where this variable affects the role of loneliness on psychological well-being (R square change = 0.013, $p = 0.017$). In addition, the significant and negative interaction coefficient ($B = 0.084$) indicates that the longer the duration of student residence, the stronger the impact of loneliness felt by students on their psychological well-being.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Model	R	R Square	F	Sig. (F)	Beta (Standardized)	B (Unstandardized)	t	Sig. (t)
1	0,714	0,509	220,151	< 0.05	-0,714	-0,156	-14,837	< 0.05
2	0,584	0,341	109,626	< 0.05	-0,584	-0,182	-10,470	< 0.05
3	0,627	0,393	137,384	< 0.05	-0,627	-0,138	-11,721	< 0.05
4	0,582	0,339	108,684	< 0.05	-0,582	-0,193	-10,425	< 0.05
5	0,482	0,232	64,199	< 0.05	-0,482	-0,105	-8,012	< 0.05
6	0,509	0,259	74,154	< 0.05	-0,509	-0,082	-8,611	< 0.05
7	0,720	0,518	227,647	< 0.05	-0,720	-0,856	-15,088	< 0.05

a. Predictors: (Contant), Loneliness

b. Dependent Variables: (1) Self-Acceptance, (2) Positive relationships with others, (3) Autonomy, (4) Environmental Mastery, (5) Life Purpose, (6) Personal Growth, (7) Psychological Well-Being

Table 6. MRA Analysis Results

Variable Moderator	R ² Change	F Change	Sig. F Change	B	Sig. (Interaction)	VIF Highest	Result
Age	0.001	0.287	0.593	-0.021	0.593	1.060	Not Significant
Gender	0.001	0.372	0.543	-0.074	0.543	13.557	Not Significant
Duration	0.013	5.746	0.017	-0.084	0.017	3.398	Significant
Programme type	0.002	0.958	0.329	0.183	0.329	1.093	Not Significant

*Notes: PWB = Psychological Wellbeing; Loneliness = Loneliness Score (centred).

*Highest VIF is the maximum VIF value observed among the independent variables, moderator, and term

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of descriptive analysis, it was found that the majority of Indonesian students studying abroad have low levels of loneliness and high levels of psychological well-being. This finding shows that despite facing significant cultural and environmental transitions, most students are able to maintain a positive psychological state.

The low level of loneliness among Indonesian students studying abroad can be attributed to Russell (1982) definition of loneliness, as a negative feeling resulting from a mismatch between desired social relationships and the social relationships individuals have. This low level of loneliness can be interpreted that the student has good and intimate social relationships with the people around him so that the individual does not feel alone or alienated (Tranggono et al., 2022).

This finding is inversely proportional to the findings of Rahmatullah et al. (2022) who found that Indonesian students studying abroad had difficulty in building social relationships with fellow international students and local communities due to language barriers that made them feel isolated. This difference can be caused by several things that protect students from feeling lonely. This is evidenced by the results of interviews with several respondents, where exchange students with a duration of stay of less than 6 months are known to be able to build friendships with fellow students from Indonesia. This happens because Indonesian exchange students still live in the same dormitory. In addition, the condition of these exchange students is similar to the findings of (Cahyadi, 2019), where 17 out of 20 international students of the Darmasiswa programme at Yogyakarta State University experience loneliness at a low level due to the many activities that students must do while undergoing an exchange programme. This encourages them to continue to socialise with fellow exchange students, local students, and lecturers. Thus, they have little time to feel lonely.

Whereas for undergraduate students who have a duration of stay of more than 6 months, it is known that

they also make friends with fellow students from Indonesia through the Indonesian Student Association in the country and city where they are studying. Thus, despite being separated from their families and old friends in Indonesia, students do not feel lonely because they can still establish social relationships with fellow Indonesian students and local communities in the country where they study. This is in line with Kristlyna and Sudagijono (2020) who stated that low loneliness conditions in Indonesian students studying abroad can occur because students continue to establish friendships with students who are also from Indonesia who are in the country. Broadly speaking, this finding indicates the important role of the strong cultural value of collectivism in Indonesian students studying abroad which encourages them to form and maintain strong group relationships as a source of social support.

Furthermore, this study also found that the majority of respondents had high psychological well-being. This high level of psychological well-being can be interpreted that most of these students, despite studying in an environment that is different from Indonesia, are able to live their lives optimally according to their abilities (Ryff, 1989). This is in line with the opinion of K. Bhagchandani (2017), where high psychological well-being indicates that individuals feel at peace with themselves and others. According to Girmay and Singh (2019), this condition can occur because students can adapt to their new social environment, either through interaction with local people, participation in social activities and accepting cultural differences that exist by recognising local culture.

This finding is inversely proportional to the previous findings of Rahman et al. (2020), who stated that Indonesian students studying in Taiwan have less than optimal psychological well-being conditions because they have not been able to adapt to the country where they study, especially in terms of culture and language that are different from those in Indonesia. The difference in these findings with the findings of Rahman et al. (2020) can occur considering the limitations of Indonesian students in Taiwan in using the local language so that it affects the smooth interaction with the local community, considering

that these Indonesian students are required to live in dormitories in pairs with local students.

Loneliness is a common feeling felt by every individual including Indonesian students studying abroad. However, when the feeling of loneliness can be minimised, it will make students avoid various negative effects of loneliness itself. According to Girmay and Singh (2019), low feelings of loneliness can potentially prevent students from depression, interested in building social relationships, and avoiding the risk of social isolation. Furthermore, according to Bek (2014), students with low levels of loneliness tend to be more active and motivated in achieving their study abroad goals, and are able to maintain positive social interactions. This condition of minimal loneliness contributes to the creation of a good mental health condition, which in turn has a positive impact on maintaining and improving the six aspects of psychological well-being and the overall psychological well-being of the students themselves (Halim & Dariyo, 2016; Pressman et al., 2005).

The findings in this study are overall different from previous studies in terms of location, subject group, and level of loneliness and psychological well-being of respondents (Halim & Dariyo, 2016; Hayundaka & Yuniardi, 2023; Nuraini & Laksmiwati, 2024; Nurdianto et al., 2023). However, overall, they still discuss the experience of loneliness and its effect on psychological well-being with similar results where there is a negative influence of feelings of loneliness on the subject's psychological well-being.

The findings in this study in general, provide an overview of the impact of loneliness on the psychological well-being of Indonesian students studying abroad and provide an overview for prospective students who want to continue their studies abroad in order to better prepare themselves in facing challenges and finding the right solutions. In addition, these findings also add to the literature related to cross-cultural psychology that specifically highlights the experiences of international students from Indonesia at the undergraduate level, especially regarding the relationship between loneliness and perceived psychological well-being. Thus, it is very important for various related parties to be able to develop systematic interventions to support the psychological well-being of Indonesian students while studying abroad, starting from the students themselves to the Indonesian Student Association. Students are expected to pay more attention to their own psychological conditions, proactively build good relationships with local people and fellow international students, join organisations or communities, and actively learn about local culture. Through these steps, students can adapt and form positive social relationships. In addition, the Indonesian Student Association or similar organisations can design and deliver programmes that focus on strengthening relationships between students, assisting students in adapting to the culture and environment, and providing early psychological support platforms for students. These interventions will be crucial in maintaining and improving the psychological well-being of Indonesian students studying abroad.

Finally, the results of this study have limitations in drawing conclusions where the results of this study cannot cover or match the conditions of other subjects, considering that this study was conducted on a sample of Indonesian students, who may have different cultural characteristics and adaptation strategies from international students from other countries. In addition, this study has limitations in the coverage of respondents who have not

been evenly distributed and have not reached several countries where Indonesian students study. With a more diverse distribution of respondents, it is expected to enrich the results of future research. So, for future research, it is hoped that future researchers can add respondents who study in other countries with an even percentage of respondents in each country.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study, it can be concluded that the majority of Indonesian students studying abroad have low feelings of loneliness (79.4%) and high levels of psychological well-being (69.2%). However, the feeling of loneliness is known to have a significant negative role on students' psychological well-being both overall and on the six dimensions of psychological well-being itself. In other words, the lower the feeling of loneliness felt by students, the more their psychological well-being increases.

The findings in this study add to the literature related to cross-cultural psychology that specifically highlights the experiences of international students from Indonesia at the undergraduate level, especially regarding the relationship between loneliness and perceived psychological well-being.

From these findings, it is imperative for various relevant parties to be able to develop systematic interventions to support the psychological well-being of Indonesian students abroad. Students are expected to pay more attention to their own psychological conditions, proactively build good relationships with local people and fellow international students, join organizations or communities, and actively learn about local culture. Through these steps, students can adapt and form positive social relationships. In addition, the Indonesian Student Association or similar organizations can design and conduct programs that focus on strengthening relationships between students, assisting students in adapting to the culture and environment, and providing early psychological support platforms for students. These interventions will be crucial in maintaining and improving the psychological well-being of Indonesian students studying abroad.

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DECLARATION

Use of Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Technology

During the drafting of this paper, the author used AI assistive technologies, namely Grammarly, DeepL, and Gemini to help develop initial ideas, improve grammar, spelling, and writing style. All analysis, ideas, and arguments in this paper are the original work of the author.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This research has received ethical approval with letter number (25.4.10/UN32.14/PB/2025) from the Head of the Research Ethics Committee of State University of Malang. All participants provided written consent before participating in this study.

Consent for publication

All participants gave consent for the publication of the research results, while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality.

Availability of Data and Material (ADM)

Data and materials are not available online. However, the researchers can be contacted for data requests.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests, either financial or non-financial, that could influence the research presented in this paper.

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Authors' contributions

The role and contribution of the author and supervisor have an equally important role in achieving the success of this research.

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